CHORAZIN

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Chorazin or, An Appeal to
the child of many prayers,

CHORAZIN.

CHORAZIN,

OR,

An Appeal

TO

THE CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS,

ON QUESTIONS CONCERNING

THE GREAT SALVATION.

BY

DAVID EVERARD FORD,

AUTHOR OF "DECAPOLIS," "DAMASCUS," "LAODICEA," "ALARM IN ZION," ETC.

"From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Tim. iii. 15.

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo unto thee, CHORAZIN."—Matt. xi 20, 21.

Ninth Thousand.

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PREFACE

TO THE NINTH THOUSAND.

THE following treatise, designed for a numerous class of readers, in whose conversion the Church may be supposed to feel an especial interest, was written at the request of a devoted Minister of Christ,* who, thinking that the extraordinary success of "DECAPOLIS" might prepare the way for a second publication of a somewhat similar kind, suggested this subject as one of paramount importance.

The intended title was "THE CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS;" but apprehending that it might mislead the public, and induce some to think it a book for children, and others a memoir of early piety, for obvious reasons I adopted the present as a more distinctive designation.

If I have, in the least degree, succeeded in placing in a somewhat clearer light than usual, certain questions which, to finite minds, will perhaps always be involved in some obscurity, it is simply the result of calling no man master upon earth, and of taking the word of God in its plain grammatical sense,

* The late Rev. Thomas Saunders Guyer, of Ryde; a man whose character embodied a larger portion of the loveliness of Christianity than is ordinarily seen in this imperfect world. He rests from his labours, and his works follow him.

as the only standard of religious doctrine. Everything like special pleading, in order to support some favourite system, I utterly disclaim. So far as I know my own heart, my only wish has been, earnestly and successfully to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

Eight thousand copies of this little work are now in the hands of the British public; several American editions have facilitated its circulation throughout the United States, and from various quarters, on both sides of the Atlantic, I have received most cheering assurances that it has not been written in vain.

Some to whom it has shown "the path of life," are already "gathered to their fathers;" and (blessed be His holy name!) many still remain to testify that "CHORAZIN" was God's message of mercy to the saving of their souls.

Its half-title, designed for that purpose, has often borne the inscription of affectionate regard. And, now that the English post-office transmits, for sixpence (if sent in an open envelope), a volume of this size, to any part of the United Kingdom, it is not unlikely that Christian parents will, more frequently than before, thus express their best wishes for the spiritual welfare of sons and daughters away from home.

May that gracious Saviour, the promotion of whose glory is the only worthy object of life or labour, crown with yet more abundant success my poor endeavour to advocate his claims!

D. E. F.

Manchester, January 21, 1850.

CHORAZIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS, WHO IS UNCONCERNED ABOUT RELIGION.

He, that searcheth the hearts of the children of men, alone can tell how vast is the number of those who answer to this description. Reader! perhaps he regards *you* as one. It may be that, notwithstanding all the advantages of early training, your heart is unrenewed, and your immortal spirit exposed to the untold horrors of the second death.

If you only suspect that such may possibly be the case, give yourself the full benefit of that doubt, not by endeavouring to look on the most favourable side of the question, or studying to find reasons for saying, "Peace!

peace!" when perhaps there is no peace for you, Jer. viii. 11, but by going thoroughly into the matter, without delay. The inquiry involves your life or death. Surely, for such an investigation, everything else may lawfully be set aside. Then take this book at once to your closet, and read it there.

Although I address you through the press, I wish to be considered as conversing with you alone. It has been my happiness thus to meet not a few, who at the first interview were as regardless of the claims of Christ as any child of many prayers can be, but of whom I have since been enabled to cherish a hope, that I shall meet them in heaven when my work is done, and find them, my joy and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming, 1 Thess. ii. 19. My wish now is to do *you* good. I therefore implore your most serious attention to some important considerations, which, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, have already found their way to many a conscience, and many a heart. The least you can do, is to hear me patiently.

I love plain dealing, especially on questions which relate to the salvation of souls. I shall, therefore, without further preface or apology,

take the title of this chapter as a corect description of your condition. You make no profession of religion, and so far you are consistent, for you have no religion to profess. Whatever may be the extent of your ignorance in relation to the things of God, you have been sufficiently instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to know that piety forms no element of your character.

The case, which I am supposing, is by no means infrequent. I have met with some who have even endeavoured to shield themselves under the plea of non-profession. It is one of those refuges of lies, in which conscience seeks to hide itself from "the sword of the Spirit." I remember an occasion on which I felt it my duty to reprove a young lady, for the trifling manner in which she was quoting some passage of Scripture, when she met me by saying—"Sir, I make no profession: if I did, the case would be different;"—and she said it with all the frankness and ingenuousness of sincerity, as if she had been stating a fact which at once secured her a perfect indemnity from all the pains and penalties of religious disobedience.

Among persons whose habits and associations

have all been of a worldly character, the same sentiment is often carried to a greater length. I have heard a man of that description exclaim, with all the self-importance of the Pharisee in the temple,—"Thank God, I am no hypocrite!" He might have said, with equal propriety,—"Thank God, I am wicked enough to make no secret of my sin!" This would only have been speaking out his mind. He *is* no hypocrite, but why? Because, like Pharaoh, he boldly refuses to obey the Lord, scorns concealment, and glories in his shame.

It may be, that you not only have taken refuge in this plea, but have even prided yourself on that circumstance. When you have heard of some scandalous professor who has brought reproach on religion, you have secretly thought, "How much better am I!" *How* much, think you? I own that you are more consistent, but your consistency avails you nothing; it is only consistency in sin; it is only the consistency of being bad altogether, without pretending to be otherwise; and nothing but partiality the most blind, and self-deception the most determined, can lead you to imagine yourself in a fairer way to heaven, than are those who have openly forsaken the path of righteousness.

Supposing this to be your state of mind, it is not impossible, that you have felt secret satisfaction in cases of backsliding or apostasy. The feeling was so nearly akin to the acknowledged disposition of Satan, that you dared not give it utterance, you were ashamed to confess it to yourself, but nevertheless, you rejoiced in iniquity. This was the reason why, on a certain occasion, you circulated a scandalous report, with all the alacrity of a willing witness, and took care not to omit a single aggravation. I am not attempting to defend the backslider or the apostate. He probably deserves all the disgrace he suffers, and even more; but this is no excuse for *you*. Your feelings, at the time, were those of an accuser of the brethren. Your satisfaction was that which the psalmist imputes to the enemies of truth and righteousness.—"Ah, so would we have it!" Psalm xxxv. 25. The indignation, which you were so prompt to express, arose not from jealousy for the honour of God. Your forwardness to accuse of sin, sprang from no wish to convert a transgressor, or reclaim a backslider from the error of his ways. Be honest to your soul, and say—Was it not pure, unmixed malignity? It was; for you were glad to find that one more highly

esteemed than yourself, had belied his profession; and on the ruins of his reputation, you wished to build a temple to your own self-righteousness. If all this, or only a part of it, be true, you have not only a wicked, but a hardened heart. You are in "the gall of bitterness," as well as in "the bond of iniquity."

I will suppose, however, that you are altogether guiltless of everything included in such a charge. You have never cherished so hateful a disposition, nor have you felt the slightest satisfaction, or pleasure, on these, or any similar grounds. You are utterly unconscious of any feeling towards your fellow-creatures, but kindness and good will. So far from rejoicing in iniquity, you have always been disposed to look on the most favourable side of private character, and never have you imputed a bad motive, where a better might be found. You have always been glad to shield the reputation of others, and when you could allege nothing of a favourable tendency, you have held your peace, determined where you could say no good, to speak no ill. I will suppose all this, and more than this. I will imagine your character to combine all that is lovely, so far as moral excellence can exist apart from religion; I will

admit you to be a general favourite, a being admired, and praised, and beloved, by every body: yet, I bring against you the charge of the prophet, who interpreted the handwriting in Belshazzar's palace,—"The God in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting," Daniel v. 23, 27. With all your excellence of character, with all your loveliness of disposition, you have no hope, and are without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12.

In you, the highest aim of parental affection has been disappointed; it has failed to lead you to the cross. Others have found peace and pardon there, and among them some of the companions and associates of your former days, but the instrumentality which reached their hearts, has left yours unchanged. You have had sabbaths, and have heard sermons, from which some have dated their conversion; but on you they were lost. Had an apostle been your minister, he would weep to think that he had bestowed upon you labour in vain.

And yours is not a negative condition of mind, a mere destitution of piety, the possible result of defective information. In the case

of one possessing your advantages, ignorance is not only a poor, but a shameful excuse. You make no profession of religion; but you know, or ought to know, that God requires that profession, and you will have to tell him the reason why you declined or refused to make it. The very acknowledgment condemns you. A refusal to confess Christ before men, is a deed which sets at defiance the authority of God, John v. 23, and invokes the threatened terrors of the last judgment, Luke ix. 26. It is a solemn and deliberate act, by which the soul puts away salvation, declines the offer of everlasting life, and testifies to the world its determination to perish.

I have mentioned your advantages; I entreat you to review them. You must do it, sooner or later; I beseech you to do it now. Perhaps you are hardly aware of their extent. I will therefore endeavour to refresh your memory.

You are the child of many prayers. Had your parents been among the victims of popular delusion, they might have taught you to mistake "the doctrine of baptisms and laying on of hands," for "repentance from dead works," and "faith towards God." This they

never did. From the first, it was their anxious endeavour to impress upon your mind that, important as outward ordinances may be, the kingdom of God consists not in them, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. You are the child of many prayers. Had your parents been people of the world, they might have taught you to disregard religion altogether, or to account it a barely tolerable piece of supererogation, another name for weariness and melancholy. But in their earliest lessons, they instructed you to the contrary. And you saw the fact in their example; devotion made them happy. You are the child of many prayers. Had your parents loved dissipation, they might have taught you to admire it too. Among the votaries of fashion, or the slaves of sensuality, you might, by this time, have thought the ball-room, or the ale-house, the happiest place in the universe. But theirs were nobler pleasures. Communion with God, and fellowship with the saints, supplied them with unfailing resources of delight. You are the child of many prayers. Had your parents been infidels, they might have taught you to consider the sabbath a lawful holiday, and to treat the sanctions of

religion as the inventions of priestcraft. Blinded by fatal delusions, you might have regarded the most powerful Christian appeal that could reach you, from the pulpit or the press, as only a fine specimen of professional pleading. But they called the sabbath a delight, they loved the sanctuary, and they held in reputation, for their works' sake, all the faithful ministers of Christ. You remember which they accounted the happiest morning in the week, —it told of the joys of heaven : and you cannot have forgotten who was always their most welcome guest,—the servant of Christ who had done most for his Master. You are the child of many prayers. But need I further pursue this train of reminiscences ? I could mention many other circumstances, all tending to the same point, but I forbear. Those which I have set before you will suffice for my purpose, and I leave your conscience to supply the rest.

You must admit that others have temptations and prejudices which you have never known. Trained in ignorance and pride, in vice and irreligion, they have little conception that, in despising experimental godliness, they are doing anything more than expressing their

superior shrewdness, and showing their entire freedom from fanatical weakness, and vulgar superstition. And these are not the notions of some despicable little sect, whose errors are confined within a very narrow enclosure; they are the opinions of myriads, who, whether they belong to the lowest ranks of society or its highest circles, think, like Saul of Tarsus, that they ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth, and who even imagine that, in opposing the progress of truth and righteousness, they are doing God service. Although they persecute the saints, according to their own notions, they are very religious people; and should any warm-hearted Christian express a suspicion to the contrary, they would reply—"Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?"

Let me entreat you again to review your advantages, and to pursue the inquiry—to what purpose you have employed them. But supposing your case had been otherwise, think not that with impunity you might have neglected the things which belong to your peace. Favoured or not, you have a soul to be saved or lost, and vast multitudes, who have never had your opportunities, have righteously pe-

rished in their sins. So darkened were their understandings by the ignorance which was in them, that in folly and dissipation they saw no harm. But they ought to have seen it, and their neglecting to see it was an act of wilful rebellion against God. Thousands, from the circles of worldly gaiety, have danced along the downward road, with scarcely a suspicion that anything was amiss with them in heart or life. Surrounded by parasites, who commended their virtues, and flattered their pride, they fancied themselves the very paragons of excellence, until eternity dispelled their dreams of peace and safety, and gave them to understand that "purple and fine linen" are nothing worth beyond the grave, Luke xvi. 19, 23. And millions, from the lowest walks of life, trained in ignorance and crime, with hardly an idea of conscience or religion, have crept along, in squalid wretchedness, to find yet deeper degradation in eternity.

Imagine not that any of these have died unjustly. It may be that they will always have reason to charge with murderous cruelty some who knew their danger, but never cared to mention it; who saw them sinking into hell, and never attempted their rescue; but God is

not unrighteous, who taketh vengeance, Rom. iii. 5. On him they had not the slightest claim; and when, as an act of grace, he placed instruction within their reach, they refused his counsel, and would none of his reproof. Every one of them perished by his own iniquity. They knew not the way of peace, but they ought to have known it, and they might have known it, if they would, Luke xix. 42. Ignorant as they were, they were acquainted with the fact, that some professed a religion, said to be divine, of which they themselves were destitute. It would have been but reasonable, had they made this fact the subject of their anxious inquiry, and, instead of regarding the "saints" as a people beneath contempt, carefully examined the grounds of their faith and conduct. The result of such an investigation, pursued in the exercise of a becoming spirit, would have been the resolution foretold by Zechariah, in connexion with the restoration of Zion,—"We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you," chap. viii. 23. But, far from such inquiries and such results, with fashionable sinners they enjoyed the laugh which was raised by some popular novelist, while by the sorcery of his pen he associated every noble

emotion with all the basest passions of the human heart, confounded with evangelical religion everything that was mean and contemptible, and held up to public scorn, clad in the grotesque habiliments of his prolific fancy, men of whom the world was not worthy, and whose works of faith and labours of love will praise them in the gate when the names of their calumniators, if remembered at all, shall be held in deserved execration ;—or, with the vulgar crowd, they assailed with cursing and blasphemy the few who really sought their benefit, and whose earnest wish was to show them the way of salvation ;—or, with vast numbers of both classes, who care for none of these things, they gave themselves no trouble about the matter, and never attempted to ascertain who was right, or who was wrong.

But, to descend yet lower, had even these opportunities of information, although so inferior to yours, been altogether withheld, each one, neglecting to glorify God, would have sinned at his peril. On this subject, the testimony of divine revelation is clear and conclusive ; it maintains that the very heathen are left "without excuse," Rom. i. 19, 20.

Indeed, it must be so, if, as the Scriptures teach, salvation is entirely of grace, Eph. ii. 8; for man having no claim upon God for the thing itself, must be equally destitute of any natural right to the means and instrumentalities with which it is connected.

The message of mercy, as well as mercy itself, is a matter of grace, to which no sinner can have the slightest title but by special grant. But you have had the one, and you may, if you will, have the other. The message and the mercy, the word of life and life through the word, may alike be yours. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye, to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price," Isaiah lv. 1. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. The invitation is as full as language can express, it is as free as divine compassion can render it; and you are as welcome to all the blessings which it sets before you, as you are to hail the cheerful light, or breathe the vital air.

But think not that God will save you

against your will. He will not. If the warnings and the invitations, if the threatenings and the encouragements, which he sets before you, to awaken your fear and excite your hope, fail to originate in your soul a wish to flee from the wrath to come, you may have it so. No miracle shall be wrought to convince you that Jesus is the Son of God; no messenger shall return from the grave to tell you its secrets; you have Moses and the prophets, you have more, you have Christ and the apostles, and you refuse to hear them. And that which makes you unwilling now, will make you unwilling to-morrow, next week, next month, next year, and so on, to the end of life. Yes, and your unwillingness will increase as time advances. You have found it so, already. Even now, you are less susceptible of religious impressions than you formerly were. Persist in your present course a little longer, and your heart will be hardened, your conscience will be seared, and as to all religious anxiety, you will be past feeling. Perhaps, even now, you are ready to lay down this book as unsuited to your years. You feel that you are beyond the age of remonstrance and impression. A child no longer,

you have put away childish things, and among them you reckon attention to any opinions but your own. It may be, that you are far advanced in life, and that parental anxiety for your salvation is a thing of former days. But the confession that childhood and youth are past, brings you no excuse ; it but aggravates your guilt. Trained as you have been, a child of tender age would have a fearful reckoning with God for having neglected the great salvation ; but of how much sorer punishment will you be thought worthy ! The grave may have closed on your parents, these twenty, thirty, forty years ; but that which their piety did for you can never be undone. It was by no unmeaning ceremony that they consecrated you to God. Their prayers went up as a memorial before him, and he bears in everlasting remembrance their supplications and the augmented responsibility which those supplications entailed upon you. No lapse of time can cancel your peculiar obligations : the years of Methuselah would not weaken them. Remain unsaved, and when ages of intolerable anguish shall have rolled away, yet leaving eternity untouched and the amount of future duration appalling as ever, the fiercest corus-

cations of the burning lake shall mark your locality in hell, and the lost who once dwelt in Tyre and Sidon, yea, in Sodom and Gomorrah, shall behold from a distance, with fear and trembling, the more awful vengeance which befalls the unconverted child of many prayers.

Think not the severity of such a doom disproportionate to your guilt. The admissions of common sense, no less than the requirements of eternal rectitude, demand that where much is given, much shall be required, and that to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more, Luke xii. 48.

If you have taken my advice, you are now alone. You have left your usual pursuits. Your ordinary companions are all away. The stillness of the closet affords an opportunity for meditation, penitence, and prayer. Think of the past, the present, and the future. Eternity hangs upon your decision. Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things!

CHAPTER II.

THE CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS, WHO IS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF STRONG DELUSIONS.

In some respects, I have often found it an easier task to press the claims of the Gospel on those who have never known "the way of righteousness," than on those who, having known it, have turned from "the holy commandment." In the case of the former, there is often a frankness which at once acknowledges the truth, whereas in the latter, there is frequently a disingenuousness which endeavours to dispute its claims. Thus, the child of many prayers will often find a hiding-place for conscience, where others would hardly dream of seeking one; and while "publicans and harlots" are pressing into the kingdom of God, not a few, who have been trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, are found

to assign ingenious excuses for neglecting the great salvation, and pious reasons for resisting the Holy Ghost.

Reader! is this the case with you? Then, for your special benefit, I write this chapter. May God afford me strength and wisdom to drag you from your refuges of lies, and lead you to his feet!

The strongest delusions, which blind the conscience and harden the heart, are those which stand associated with perverted, or isolated truth. A text of Scripture, wrested from its connexion, or some sacred doctrine, rashly presented in an exclusive and questionable light, will often do the mischief which open infidelity would fail to accomplish. You would probably avoid the sceptic or the atheist, as you would a serpent or a lion, and for the same reason,—the apprehension of personal injury; or, if unconscious of fear, respect for religion might induce you to refrain from all association with men in relation to whom your inmost conscience breathes the sentiment,—"O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united;" yet so great is your inconsistency, that while you appear to reverence divine

truth and render homage to the Most High, you quote Scripture to excuse your unbelief, and tax the moral government of God with reasons for resisting his will.

Among those reasons, it is not improbable that a perverted view of divine sovereignty holds a conspicuous place. This so commonly happens, that in attempting to convince the sinner, that should he perish in iniquity, his blood will lie at his own door, it is necessary, first of all, to show that the only way in which the divine government is implicated in his rebellion, is that it threatens and inflicts the righteous penalties of transgression, and that, whatever may befall the offender, God is not unrighteous who taketh vengeance.

You are aware that no such phrase as *divine sovereignty*, occurs in the sacred volume. This, however, is no proof that the doctrine is not there. *Moral obligation* is in the same predicament, but every page in the Bible teaches it. The mere omission of the phrase in question, affords therefore no presumption that the doctrine is unscriptural: it exposes us, however, to a difficulty in its exposition, which otherwise would not exist. If the phrase were found in the Scriptures, we should

have some solid ground on which to rest our conclusions; as we might perhaps, from the tenor of the passages containing it, arrive at something like a definite idea of its meaning. But, used as it has been, in the schools of theology, sometimes in one sense, sometimes in another, and not seldom in no sense at all, its meanings are so often, and so dexterously interchanged, by the serious trifler, while he pleads it to justify his ungodliness, that it becomes no easy task to follow him through the windings of his path, and to convince him that, all the while, he is but sporting with his own deceivings.

If, by the sovereignty of God, be intended his illimitable dominion over all beings and all worlds, the doctrine is as unquestionable as his existence, and supplies us with abundant matter of devout and grateful satisfaction. It even inspires the songs of eternity. The anthems of heaven contain such strains as these: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created," Rev. iv. 11. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways,

thou King of saints," chap. xv. 3. But sovereignty, in this sense, is the sovereignty of infinite goodness. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," Psalm cxlv. 9. And while rebellion, on the part of some of his creatures, renders it necessary, as well for his glory, as for the safety of the remaining universe, that their sin should be visited with everlasting destruction, he publicly records the solemn declaration,—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," Ezekiel xxxiii. 11.

It is, however, to be apprehended, that a very different view of divine sovereignty is entertained by some, who, if they really mean what their language implies, would resolve all the dispensations of Heaven into mere caprice, and charging upon God the origin of evil, would profanely ask,—"Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" Rom. ix. 19. But a course of argument which can only be sustained by the fatal process with which Peter charges the unlearned and unstable while wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction, 2 Peter iii. 16, may be left, to carry with it its own refutation.

Others, of a very different order of mind, have been greatly embarrassed as to what is commonly called the sovereignty of grace, and they have pleaded in justification of their fears, Romans ix. 18 :—"He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." I have heard this text quoted more frequently than any other, as an argument for despair; and some have seemed to regard it as an apology for their unbelief. But, let me ask,—On whom will he have mercy? We should never have known, had he not told us; but it is now no longer a mystery, for the pen of inspiration has revealed the secret. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isaiah lv. 7. And how comes it to pass that any are hardened? The holy oracle again replies,—"Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," 2 Thess. ii. 10

—12. Thus, you see that whereas, had it been merely an act of sovereign *power*, it is conceivable that mercy might have been exercised in a way which would have endangered the safety of the universe; as an act of sovereign *goodness*, it is only exhibited in a manner accordant with infinite rectitude, and that though the Lord is gracious and full of compassion unto all them that call upon him, Psalm cxlv. 8, 18, he will by no means clear the guilty, Exod. xxxiv. 7. How, having "concluded all under sin," Gal. iii. 22, he can "have mercy upon all," Rom. xi. 32, is one of the secrets of his government, which is only taught within the precincts of the cross. Thither go, and learn it there.

One word here, on a misapplication of the term in question, which cannot be too strongly reprobated. To impute to divine sovereignty the non-bestowment of promised blessings, or to maintain that God has secret purposes at variance with his open declarations, is to commit a sin, for which I would leave an apostle to find a name. It is to make God a liar, and to prove that his word is not in us.

Sovereignty, in the divine government, as distinguishable from equity, is only another

term for superabounding goodness. It is that which the psalmist describes, when speaking of the Lord, as merciful and gracious, he adduces, in proof of that fact, that "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," Psalm ciii. 10. To have done so would have been *equity*, for it would have been giving us our just deserts; not to have done so is *sovereignty*, for it is a dispensation of goodness to which we have no claim. The salvation of a sinner is, in the very nature of the case, irrespective of personal desert, for his deservings have another and a contrary tendency. We therefore read —"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," Titus iii. 5; but to imagine, that lost souls can parody this glorious statement, and say,—"Not by works of wickedness which we have done, but according to his sovereign purpose he doomed us to perdition," is to suppose a case of blasphemy, to which it is probable that the wickedness of hell itself affords no parallel.

On this subject I have detained you longer than I otherwise should, under a persuasion that misapprehensions concerning it are fear-

fully common. Ever since the fall, there has been, on the part of man, a disposition to impute his ruin to anything rather than his own act. This tendency is fatal, wherever it is cherished; for while the transgressor regards himself as an object of pity rather than a subject of blame, never will he welcome a scheme of mercy which assumes, among its first axioms, his utter depravity. "They that are whole," said Jesus, "need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Luke v. 31, 32.

"But, perhaps, I am not one of the elect." Is this your reply? Beware of trifling with God. Of those to whom he has sent his gracious invitations, he has chosen none to salvation but "through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter i. 2, and he has thus chosen all who will welcome his Spirit and reverence his Son. "For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," Rom. x. 11—13. Seek

not then the elements of despair among the materials of hope, but by submission to Christ at once demonstrate, that "God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13. Divine decrees leave altogether untouched the free agency of man; and even were it otherwise, our rule of obligation could never be the secret foreknowledge of God as to what we *would* do, but his public directions as to what we *ought* to do. Those directions concerning nothing are so ample as in reference to the full surrender of our hearts and lives to his praise; and they require, not only that sinners should cleanse their hands and purify their hearts, James iv. 8, but that saints themselves, who have obtained "precious faith," "having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust," should still give diligence to make their "calling and election sure," (*βεβαίαν*, stedfast,) 2 Peter i. 10.

In relation to divine decrees, much darkening of counsel, by words without knowledge, has arisen from the fact, that men have reasoned on the purposes of God as though he were a finite being, like themselves. But if

we remember that all his designs assume for their basis his infinite knowledge, it seems not impossible for even us to perceive how certainty, on his part, may co-exist with perfect freedom on ours.

Tedious as this disquisition may appear, I cannot relinquish it without adverting to the vulgar objection—"If I am to be saved, I shall be saved; and if I am not, I never shall be." As an argument, it is unworthy of notice, for it is merely a truism; but as a delusion, with which Satan blinds the minds of many who believe not, it requires exposure, for in that sense it is a falsehood. Suffice it to say, that no one will be saved, but in accordance with God's plan of salvation. To maintain the contrary, is to suppose that Jehovah can deny himself. He commands you to receive the Gospel, but still leaves you at liberty to reject it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, and so inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34; believe not, and you will be damned, Mark xvi. 16; and while you sink "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41, your doom will be in no wise unexpected,

for you will perish among ungodly men who were before of old ordained (*προγεγραμμένοι*, fore-written) to this condemnation, Jude 4. Welcome the message of mercy, and you will evermore give thanks, that God hath not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thess. v. 9; die in your sins, and you will perish in express defiance of his authority, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4.

Do you abandon all pretence of charging your irreligion upon God, or deny that such was ever your intention? Beware then of an opposite error, less flagrant indeed, but neither less common nor less fatal. So complicated is the mystery of iniquity, it often happens that, no sooner is a sinner driven to an acknowledgment of his entire depravity, than he begins to make that depravity a cloak for his sin. How this could possibly be done, it would puzzle an angel to discover, unless he had made the deceitfulness of sin a subject of previous study. Indeed, the principle on which it is attempted is so outrageously at variance with the common sense of mankind, that they never think of admitting it in their transactions with

each other. Alas! for man, that he dares to treat God as he would not dare to treat his neighbour, and risks his soul where he would not venture his worldly estate! The substance of the excuse in question, plainly and briefly stated, is this, "As I am wicked, I must be wicked, and I cannot help it."

Far be it from me to deny, or even to palliate, the depravity of human nature. It is my firm persuasion that no language can overstate it. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9; God alone can fully understand the extent of its pollution, and comprehend the vile mysteries of its chambers of imagery, Ezek. viii. 12. But he that searcheth the hearts of the children of men, Prov. xv. 11, "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. Such a Gift, from such a Giver, supposes adaptation to the case, whatever it may be. The wisdom of so gracious a provision must surely equal its benevolence.

A divine revelation, suited to our first parents in their innocence, would now be obsolete. We might admire it as a curious piece

of antiquity, and treasure it among other proofs of the manifold wisdom of God; yet, to all practical purposes, it would be valueless. But the revelation with which we are favoured is not of this description; it is adapted to our circumstances as fallen creatures, and it is adapted to those circumstances by infinite wisdom, and with the express design of meeting our helplessness and removing our guilt. To suppose the Gospel encumbered with conditions which render it impossible for a sinner, as such, to participate its blessings, is to suppose it adapted, perhaps, to some other sphere of being, but certainly not to ours. Such, however, is not its character. It meets man as he is, a sinner, "without strength," at enmity with God, Rom. v. 6—10, and it proposes "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," verse 21. To pretend then, as some have done, that man is as unable to comply with its terms, as he is to justify himself by the works of the law, or as others have ventured to assert, as unable to turn to God with full purpose of heart, as he is to create a world, is to assume that the "faithful saying"

is not "worthy of all acceptation," and that, so far as the ends of moral government are concerned, "Christ is dead in vain."

Of all the delusions by which the Gospel is neutralized and souls are ruined, inability, as it is commonly called, is undoubtedly the most popular. The shallow philosophy by which it is sustained can accommodate itself to the weakest head, as well as to the proudest heart; and, as it promises ease to all troubled consciences, it ranks men of all classes among its admirers and disciples. A course of argument, which would make an angel weep, has relieved them from all apprehension of responsibility to God or man. As if in mockery of religion, it supplies them with holy texts to justify unholy conduct, and under a high pretence to special illumination, sends them down to the grave, deceiving and being deceived: meanwhile, by some who can hardly be classed among its victims, (their personal piety bearing witness to their practical denial of a theory so dangerous,) it is nevertheless held as indubitable, and, in their theology, is not only confounded with humility, but is even mistaken for its clearest indication. Thus, amidst the warnings and invitations of heavenly truth,

many have lived and died in utter unconcern about religion. They actually thought discipleship to Christ no business of theirs, and never once suspected their mistake, till, summoned by him to give an account of their stewardship, they found themselves described as enemies who would not that he should reign over them, Luke xix. 27. They then awoke to the fearful discovery, that, from first to last, their rebellion was a wilful act: not a misfortune in which they had been involved by the guilt of others, but a determined, repeated, continuous, and flagrant resistance of the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them. He would, but they would not, Matt. xxiii. 37. He willed their salvation, 1 Tim. ii. 4, and afforded them the appliances of obtaining it, John v. 34, but they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, Acts xiii. 46.

Moral inability, when correctly explained, is a convenient and unobjectionable phrase; but, as employed by many, it becomes a cloak for sin. Call it indisposition, and then you have its correct designation; but changing the name dissolves the charm, for every one perceives that disinclination to virtue can never be pleaded in extenuation of vice. In the

administration of human justice, never since the world began has indisposition to obey the law been admitted in defence of breaking it. The supposition of such a plea sets all moral principle at defiance. Imagine, if you can, a thief acknowledging, before judge and jury, that he stole the goods described in the indictment, but maintaining that he ought not to be punished for that act, because he really had no disposition to do otherwise; or a murderer confessing that he killed the man, as the witnesses had stated, but pleading in arrest of judgment, that he had a powerful inclination to destroy human life! One case is indeed supposable, but it forms no exception to my statement: it is the instance of a law so notoriously unjust, as to constitute resistance a virtue. Under such circumstances, it is conceivable that devoted patriotism might induce a man to break the oppressive statute and suffer its penalties, for the express purpose of directing public attention to its flagrant injustice, and obtaining its repeal. But nothing, analogous to such a position of affairs, can ever occur in the government of God. His law is holy, and just, and good, Rom. vii. 12, and is acknowledged so to be, by every unfallen or

regenerated being throughout the universe. And should any of his creatures, through that obliquity of moral perception which is one of the results of habitual transgression, so far forget themselves as to be otherwise minded, their united dissatisfaction would no more suffice to produce a modification of his requirements, than human interference would avail to alter the seasons of the year or the motion of the tides. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations," Psalm xxxiii. 11; "and it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail," Luke xvi. 17. The experiment has been tried, and heaven and hell unite to testify its fruitlessness. In the one, the thrones of glory which were forfeited by angels who kept not their first estate but left their own habitation, and in the other, the chains of darkness which now bind them over to the judgment of the great day, Jude 6, demonstrate that none can harden himself against God and prosper, Job ix. 4, and that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished," Prov. xi. 21.

In the moral government of God, indisposi-

tion to obey is the very essence of sin; it is that which makes it sinful, and without which it would be a mere infirmity, a calamity but not a crime. In free agents, the entire removal of such indisposition would go far to insure such results as are seen in a world where there is "no more curse," Rev. xxii. 3, or, amidst the imperfections of a probationary state, would justify the sentiment,—"Now, if I do that which I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me," Rom. vii. 20. Of all the things which God must see, among a fallen race, to provoke his displeasure, indisposition to submit to his authority is undoubtedly the most abominable. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" exclaimed the proud monarch of Egypt, whose hardened heart is presented in the epistle to the Romans as a specimen of divine abandonment, Exod. v. 2. But that which Pharaoh expressed by words, myriads have expressed by deeds; it is the language of every sin. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" replies—the profligate, when we remind him of a judgment to come;—the worldling, when we tell him of eternity;—the self-righteous, when we mention the blood of the cross;—and the loveliest

specimen of unsanctified humanity, when we say—"One thing *thou* lackest," Mark x. 21; 2 Chron. xxv. 2.

I wish most distinctly to impress upon your mind, that the reason why you should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to the saving of your soul, is, that God requires you to do it, John vi. 29. Since this is the case, you have no more to do with difficulties than Lazarus had, when Christ, standing before his grave, commanded him to come forth. Difficulties may safely be left to him with whom nothing is impossible; he knows how to dispose of them. It is his to command, it is ours to obey. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. "Stretch forth thine hand," said Jesus, Matt. xii. 13,—but that hand was "withered." If the man to whom it belonged had been trained in the notions of some of our theological schools, he would have said—"Lord! that is the very thing which I am unable to do. If I had the power of stretching forth my hand, I should not be the poor helpless cripple that I am." But instead of this, what did he? Without one word of doubt or objection, "he stretched it forth,

and it was restored whole, like as the other." Called to a similar act of obedience, "go thou, and do likewise."

But you object, that in the instance cited, he who gave the command supplied the power. Precisely so, and he does it still. He who requires you to believe, enables you to do it. He has given you that which you need for the purpose, a sound understanding to comprehend his claims, and a distinct revelation to explain and enforce them, so that under your circumstances to refuse instruction, Prov. viii. 33, is to resist the Holy Ghost, Acts vii. 51. No longer seek then to justify your disobedience on the ground of helplessness, that plea avails you not. He who declared—"No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," John vi. 44, also said,—"and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," chap. xii. 32. The verb, in the original, as in our version, is in both instances the same, and the two passages, taken together, will serve to show, that all holy influences which lead men to Christ, come down from heaven, and that those influences may be expected on the largest scale imaginable, in consequence of his sacrifice and

in connexion with the faithful exhibition of the cross. Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all who obey him, Heb. v. 9. Obey him, and he is the author of eternal salvation to *you*. Accept his offered mercy, and you have nothing whereof to boast, for the grace which drew you to his feet was God's own gift; but never persuade yourself that your refusal to obey him can possibly arise from any incapacity beyond that which results from your own wilful determination to resist and die.

But perhaps you answer—"I use the means, and what more can I do?" THE THING ITSELF. "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit. Repent, and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin," Ezek. xviii. 30. Errors, on this subject, are deeply rooted and widely spread, and they abound even in the most sacred enclosures. *Use the means, and wait for grace*, is the tune by which thousands are ordering their steps. "Soft and sweet, in Lydian measure," it steals over all the senses of the soul, and wraps them in a delicious dream. The music is delightful, but, like the siren's song, it charms to ruin. *The devil's own march to perdition* is its proper name.

You pretend to be "using the means."

What means are you using? Do you call it "using the means," to sit out your time in the sanctuary, and then to retire as if not one word of the service, not one word of the sermon, had been meant for you? Do you call it "using the means," to read the Bible now and then, and with far less interest than you commonly read a newspaper? Do you call it "using the means," to hurry through a brief and heartless prayer, morning and evening, as a salvo for conscience, and an apology for living, all the day long, without one thought of Christ and eternity?—Yes! you *are* "using the means,"—the means of insulting Jehovah, the means of hardening your heart, the means of treading under foot the Son of God, the means of doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29, the means of entailing damnation on your soul. And as to your waiting for grace;—Does *God* keep you waiting? If so, How long have you waited?—and in what posture? As they that watch for the morning? Psalm cxxx. 6, or like the sluggard of Solomon? saying — "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," Prov. vi. 10. Till in sincerity and truth, and as within sight of the judgment-

seat, you answer these questions, it is useless to trouble you further.

The excuses which I have all along been endeavouring to expose, are those which are usually cherished, by unconverted men, of thought and education. It is true that millions reject the Gospel through heathenish ignorance, or brutish vice; that some plead want of time, and others want of "learning," as a reason for quietly leaving their souls to perish; while not a few allege, in justification of their own impiety, the inconsistency of professing Christians; as though the claims of Christ could in anywise depend on the character and sincerity of those who pretend to welcome them. But as reasons so senseless, and objections so irrational, are not likely to weigh with the child of many prayers, I pass them by. At the same time, I admit that those to which I have attempted a reply, are a mere selection from a greater number. Space would fail me to pursue the subject through all its ramifications; for so multifarious are the forms of error, that every separate instance has its individual peculiarities.

In bringing this conversation to a close, I acknowledge the probability of having entirely

overlooked the cause of *your* refusal to obey the Gospel. It may be, that something yet more plausible than any of the allegations which I have attempted to expose, induces you to defer the claims of God. Be it so. Take the admission for all it may be worth. I am willing to concede, on this point, whatever you require. I will suppose that the reason which detains your soul from Christ, is the most ingenious that the mind of man can invent or entertain. Yet remember, I pray you, the purpose for which you cherish it, and the conclusion to which it leads. That reason, so powerful, so philosophical, so satisfactory, so unanswerable, is,—why you judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life, it is the reason —why you wish to be damned.

What will that reason avail you when it has secured its object, and your soul is actually lost? Will it mitigate your anguish? Will it reconcile you to your fate? Will it afford you ground of appeal from the sentence of condemnation? Should you find, in hell, some seducing spirit mad enough to think so, to what court would he advise you to carry your motion? The great and only Potentate, the Judge of all the earth, having decided against you, none can deliver

you out of his hands. The universe will own the justice of your sentence, and hell itself refuse you a hiding-place from his frown.

But let me press the inquiry a little further. I ask, then, as in the presence of Almighty God, *is* this the reason why you put away eternal life? Look at it again, and see! I have my apprehensions that it is *not*, and that the true reason lies deeper still. You mean to say, that, supposing the facts of the case to be as they are represented, it would still be possible, on the ground which as a last resort you cherish, to excuse yourself from the claims of Christ. It amounts then to this,—latent infidelity. Your boasted excuse is, after all, only what logicians term—"*non causa pro causâ*," a reason, but not the reason. You regard the facts of the Gospel as matters of doubtful authority, and therefore you trouble not yourself to ascertain the emotions which they ought to awaken. Hence it is, that destitution of piety produces, in your bosom, scarcely one feeling of alarm. Now and then you are startled with the reflection—What if religion should be more than I have taken it to be! What if, after all, I should have to give an account of myself unto God!—but it is

only a passing thought, and it never dwells long enough on your mind, to produce any deep impression there.

Admitting facts to be as prophets and apostles have represented them, would your fondly cherished reason, in common honesty, suffice? To test the reply which you are prepared to make, suppose it to be offered in person to the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes in the tenderness of his love; he shows you in his hands, and in his feet, and in his side, the prints of the nails and of the spear; he tells you that he suffered this for the redemption of your soul, and asks you, why you will not give him the grateful homage of your heart. Would you dare to mention this reason *then?* But you reply—"His personal appearance would make all the difference." Perhaps it would: but what difference would it make? Just this; it would, *in your estimation*, reduce possibility to certainty. And the value which you seem to attach to such an apparition, would arise solely from your augmented conviction of the facts, on account of which the Saviour of the world demands your services. Of those facts you have, at present, no such apprehension as will impel the mind to the natural and obvious

consequences to which they tend. In truth, you discredit revelation. I can conceive it very possible, that you are so far a self-deceiver, as to be almost unconscious of your own infidelity: but, whether at present conscious of it or not, I would have you know, that on grounds which some have admitted, and which, to the best and holiest men the world has ever seen, have appeared both reasonable and just, you stand condemned;—condemned, because you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God, John iii. 18.

It may be, however, that unbelief is so familiar to your mind, you shrink not from the charge of concealed infidelity. Your conscience, driven from its accustomed hiding-place, seeks another shelter. You are endeavouring already to find one. You apologize for scepticism, and think it indicative of mental independence. If so, your case is all but hopeless. But, before we part, I would suggest one important consideration. The grand evidences of Christianity are not found among mere probabilities, where something on the one side, is so nicely counterpoised by something on the other, that none but a clever casuist can accurately adjust the balances. The essen-

tials of faith and holiness are not matters of doubtful disputation. Immortality, to the believer in Christ, is a question of neither physics nor metaphysics, but of divine veracity; it is "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, (ὁ ἀψευδὴς Θεὸς, the unlying God,) hath promised before the world began," Titus i. 2. The advocates of infidelity have exhausted their resources, and with all their magniloquence, they seldom adduce a difficulty, or an objection, which has not been solved, or refuted, a thousand times; whereas the evidence of Christianity is cumulative, from age to age, and obtains a fresh, and separate proof, in every instance, where the truth of God is carried home to the soul, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," 1 Cor. ii. 4. The utmost satisfaction at which an unbeliever can arrive, is to *think* that his reasoning is conclusive; he can never *know* that it is so; because, with all his imagined care and impartiality, some facts, which might have given a very different turn to his conclusions, may have been overlooked in his inquiries; whereas, the man who has fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him, Heb. vi. 18, knows, as a matter of personal consciousness, that he

has passed from death unto life, John v. 24, 1 John iii. 14. The controversy, therefore, between the infidel and the Christian, is a war of assumption against fact, of opinion against experience. Hence, the most unlettered man who has a "good hope through grace," 2 Thess. ii. 16, is in possession of better reasons for faith, than the most philosophic infidel can assign for unbelief; and has, in fact, in favour of religion, evidence which nothing can disprove.

Child of many prayers! you know this, and your knowledge leaves you without excuse. *You* an infidel? Nay, verily; it cannot be! You cannot forget that your fathers trusted in God, and that he delivered them. You cannot shake off the impression that religion did for them that which mere superstition never could have accomplished. Think of the fiery trials through which they passed and over which they triumphed. Think of the strong consolations which in every hour of sorrow filled their hearts with gratitude and their lips with praise. Think of the sacred impulse, the holy, deathless principle, which constrained them to labour for God, and enabled them always to rejoice in Christ. Think of the glorious hope

which cheered them in life's darkest passage when, though flesh and heart were failing, God was the strength of their heart and their portion for ever. Think of their dying charge, when plumed for departure, yet lingering on the confines of heaven, as if unwilling to be gone, their spirits tarried a little longer ere they stretched their pinions for a final flight, only to beseech their relatives and friends, without exception, to meet them there. In fine,—by all the veneration that you cherish for the faithful dead, I conjure you to follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, Heb. vi. 12. Or if, on your hardened heart, their memory now produces no impression, I yet entreat you to have pity on your soul. Awake to serious inquiry. There is a God, and you know it. He has a throne of judgment, and thither you will soon be summoned. This alone, is "the accepted time;" only this, is "the day of salvation." Even now, the last moments of mercy are gliding by. Take warning, or you perish.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS, WHO HAS AN AWAKENED CONSCIENCE.

HAPPY should I be to know that the title of this chapter describes your present state of mind, happier still to learn that any considerations which I have set before you have contributed to so desirable an end, but happiest of all to be quite sure that you are sorrowing "after a godly sort," 2 Cor. vii. 11. The highest satisfaction attainable by man, while here below, is that which arises from witnessing the progress of religion and aiding its triumphs. I would that every Christian knew the blessedness of lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes of Zion. Were it so, the universal church would never rest while the world continued to afford a site for labour, or contained, in its highest mountains or deepest mines, unwrought materials for building

God's living temple. And, in this holy enterprise, man would not find himself alone, for nobler beings would lend their sympathy, if not their aid. There is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth; and if ever they wish themselves incarnate, it is by reason of the treasure which the ministration of the Spirit places in earthen vessels, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

Think not, however, that through mere anxiety on religious subjects, you will become a source of satisfaction, or a crown of rejoicing to angels or to men. I am not such a novice, in these matters, as to imagine, that every sigh betokens an awakened conscience, or that every tear affords a presage of conversion. Many have wept like you, and as they thought of death and judgment, sleep forsook their eyes and slumber their eyelids; but, after all, they found repose too soon, for their convictions died away, and left them still unsaved.

Of all the children of many prayers who have perished in their sins, probably few were never the subjects of hopeful impressions. Indeed, it seems hardly conceivable how parental piety can fulfil its obligations without leaving some record on the heart. A trifling

incident will often deeply affect the youthful mind, and remain, imprinted on the memory, in characters which nothing can efface.

There was a father once, who retired with his little boy, to pray with him alone. With strong crying and tears he supplicated blessings on the child, and as he wept, one big drop fell on the little hand which he grasped in both his own. Those eyes have long since ceased to weep, but the hand which felt that tear still feels it. That little boy was not converted then, but from that hour he never thought of piety without respect, for he felt assured that his father was no hypocrite.

Similar impressions, I doubt not, recur to your mind: some of your most sacred reminiscences lie in the same direction. Like Timothy, you may remember the faith of your grandmother Lois, and of your mother Eunice, —religion which once gladdened the social hearth and hallowed the domestic altar, and even now sheds its fragrance on the tomb. The memory of the just is blessed. To be the child of many prayers is better than to be the descendant of many princes; but, to rely on ancestral piety, is dangerous and fatal. Vain was the boast of having Abraham for their

father, to those who had not Abraham's faith, and did not Abraham's works, Matt. iii. 9; John viii. 39.

Remember that in correct apprehensions of sin there is nothing meritorious, or even praiseworthy. Important and indispensable as they are, they afford not the slightest recommendation to divine favour. It surely can be no credit to a sinner that he owns himself such, although to deny it would involve him in yet deeper guilt, 1 John i. 10. This caution may seem unnecessary, but you would not so account it, if you fully knew the plague of your own heart. Awakened sinners often pride themselves on their humility.

Have you abandoned your vain excuses and frankly acknowledged your guilt? Take heed lest you rest in that confession. To confess your sins is one thing, to abhor yourself on account of them is another; and you are unlikely to do either, to any valuable purpose, until you are in some degree aware of the extent of your transgressions. Even the putting away of iniquity is not always conclusive. The traitor relinquished the thirty pieces of silver, but he perished notwithstanding. To substitute repentance for the blood of sprinkling, and

reformation for the renewing of the Holy Ghost, is a fatal error into which not a few have fallen. A Christless Christianity, like theirs, might exist in Madagascar or Japan, and neither awaken persecution, nor occasion a remark. Amendment, which leaves the sinner unconverted, is a questionable change. Should no better tenant take possession of the house from which the unclean spirit is departed, its being swept and garnished affords no security that the old inhabitant will not return again, bringing with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, Luke xi. 24—26.

As I am deeply anxious to be faithful to your soul, I would, at this stage of our conference, suggest the probability that, with all your concern to flee from the wrath to come, you have yet to learn your exceeding sinfulness. Correctly to apprehend your danger, consider your desert. Sin is no trifling matter as it concerns yourself:—by indulging it you have shamefully neglected your highest interests. "Do thyself no harm" is the dictate of instinct, as well as of piety, but you have bidden it defiance. Your whole conduct has been a self-infliction of the greatest harm imaginable, for you have rudely thrust away the

hand which would have saved you from destruction.

But it is not in relation to yourself that your guilt appears in its true enormity. "Look unto the heavens, and see," Job xxxv. 5. Your iniquities bear witness against you there. To bring to your remembrance some circumstances, which perhaps you have overlooked or forgotten, let me implore a candid answer to a few plain questions.

Was it of little moment that God, who created the heavens and the earth, spake in time past to the fathers by prophets who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow, and that holy men, who believed their testimony and waited for the consolation of Israel, lived and died in faith, and so obtained witness that they were righteous? Was it a matter of no importance, that in the fulness of time the Prince of life came down from heaven, was found in fashion as a man, bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and from a sepulchre whither angels went to mark as the crisis of the universe his resurrection from the dead, arose on high, leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them?

Was it a thing of nought that being exalted at the right hand of God, to give repentance and remission of sins, he shed forth the Holy Ghost to renew the hearts of men and to prepare a people for the praise of the glory of his grace, so that myriads, once dead in trespasses and sins, have been made alive, and are living still, some a life of faith on earth, and others a life of immortality in heaven? In fine,—Is the whole revelation of mercy, from first to last, a matter of uncertainty and doubtful disputation, defective in evidence, inconclusive in argument, visionary as to present experience, and fallacious as to future hope?

See your dilemma! You dare not take the affirmative; but if you admit the negative, you stand condemned by your own confession. For if these things are *not* so, how is it that you have so accounted them? Tell me not of that respect for religion which forgets to embrace it, or of that reverence for Christ which refuses the salvation for which he lived and died. What credit was it to Judas, that when he betrayed his Lord, instead of smiting him on the cheek and spitting in his face, as some vile wretches dared to do, he behaved respectfully, saying "Hail, Master!" and kiss-

ing him? An equal share of honour belongs to you, that though you have withholden from Christ the homage of your heart, you have not denied him with your tongue, and that though to all practical purposes you have disbelieved his claims, you have never advocated infidelity.

Another circumstance, moreover, leaves you without excuse:—the whole of this neglected revelation was intended for your benefit. It was for you that prophets wrote, that apostles preached, that the Holy Ghost was given, and that the Saviour bled. Had it been otherwise, had the whole scheme of redemption related to other worlds but not to ours, yet its announcement here, ought to have excited the attention, and have awakened the gratitude, of the whole human race. If not one particle of the Gospel had been adapted to the case of man, still might prophets say—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" and to refuse to hearken, would be impiety and madness. His condescension to tell us the wonders of his ways, his benevolence to provide, in any part of the universe, so gracious a method of restoring to his favour creatures who had forfeited all claim to his complacency, his wisdom in devising a plan so amazingly adapted to all

the necessities of the case, and his faithfulness in carrying out the details of mercy into full and glorious operation, from their commencement to their close, from grace to glory, ought in itself to be a matter of devout curiosity and ecstatic thanksgiving to every virtuous being throughout the entire creation. In fact, it *is* so. We have a case exactly to the point. The angels desire to look into these things, 1 Peter i. 12, and they celebrate them in their songs, Rev. v. 9—14. And thus the elders, and the living ones, and all the hosts of heaven, pour forth their thunders of thanksgiving "unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

But while they give thanks for a scheme of mercy of which man especially was to enjoy the benefit, you, for whom its blessings were designed, have hardly thought it deserving acknowledgment. Toys and trifles have, in your estimation, been of more account than the one pearl which is of so great a price as to be worth everything besides, Matt. xiii. 46. Your neglect of the great salvation has so justly exposed you to ultimate wrath, that angels and devils have both been wondering to see you spared so long. Had you perished, years ago,

neither would have been surprised. Sins of less enormity than yours, are enough to involve a universe in ruin.

Do you deny this statement, and imagine yourself somewhat better than I have described you? The truth then is that you are far worse. I have given you credit for more light than has yet reached your understanding, and the former chapter rather than the present, belongs to you. Your conscience is not awakened; your strong delusions have never been relinquished.

Bear with me then a little longer. "How shall I give thee up!" I have not yet done with the question of your guilt in relation to God. The Holy One of Israel stands revealed to the faithful, and is adored by them, as their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Tell me under which of these gracious relations you object to his claims. Are you angry with him for forming man out of the dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life? He did you no injustice then. It cannot be a hardship that he suffers you to live. Moreover, he created you for holiness and happiness,—for glory, honour, and immortality. And when he beheld a universe in ruins he

"so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. Thus was the Word made flesh. He dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, chap. i. 14. I ask you—Is there anything objectionable here? In the language of Pilate, but with far other feelings than those he cherished, I would say—"Behold the man!" "What evil hath he done?" He died for your salvation;—"doth this offend you?" Forgive him this wrong! It would surely have been no marvel, if subdued and melted by such unutterable love, you had consecrated body, soul, and spirit, to his praise, and reckoned life itself a trifle while you laid it at his feet. It may have been that the Holy Spirit has often disturbed your slumbers and rendered you unhappy. But why are you angry on that account? The design of each remonstrance, the intention of every warning, was to save your soul. Had you not slighted his counsel, and so refused divine instruction, you had now, with those to whom there is no condemnation, been rejoicing in the assurance of hope.

Thus, has Jehovah—the Father, the Word, and the Spirit—invited your confidence and demanded your services;—has offered you pardon and purity, grace and glory; but,—like the ancient transgressors, (whose merciful toleration under the government of God appeared, to his servant Job, a subject involved in much perplexity,) you have said—"Depart, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Seeing this to have been the case, I now put it to your conscience whether you do not deserve to perish. I ask,—on what grounds you can expect even a respite of the sentence of condemnation. That sentence is already known: inserted in the statute book by Him into whose hands is committed the judgment of the world, it testifies beforehand your righteous doom, John v. 22; iii. 18, 19. Heaven approves it, earth affords no succour, and hell itself dares not deny the justice of the law which dooms you to perdition. "If I had not done among them," said Jesus, "the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father," chap. xv. 24.

Should these considerations penetrate your heart, it will not be strange if you are driven

to despair. Is such the fact already? Then I would have you know that, in a world of mercy, despair is better than indifference. I would rather see every unconverted sinner, to whom I can gain access, despairing of salvation, than resting on those delusive hopes which myriads are cherishing. When men begin to despair of salvation, it is at least some sign that they have ceased to trifle, and that their views are somewhat nearer the truth than are the maxims of the world.

Moreover, it cannot be denied that correct apprehensions of guilt contain in themselves the elements of despair. The man who is truly awakened to a sense of his condition before God, will no more expect thence to elicit hope, than he would to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. A disposition to palliate transgression and plead for little sins, is incompatible with truth, and fearfully indicative of self-deception; and the man who indulges it is one of the most hopeless characters out of hell.

Not only has the law concluded all under sin, but it testifies that the soul that sinneth shall die, Ezek. xviii. 4. Justification thence is for ever impossible. As a covenant of

works, capable of giving life, it became extinct at the fall; and now, having "entered that the offence might abound," Rom. v. 20, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified," chap. iii. 20. Its first demand, although so reasonable that no creature acknowledging the existence of God can dispute its justice, is fatal to legal hope. The man who asserts that he has always loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, would be proved, by that very assertion, scarcely less ignorant of himself than of the great and awful Being of whose claims he dares to think so lightly. But if to offend in one point is to be guilty of all, James ii. 10, the offence must indeed be flagrant when that one point happens to be the highest and the holiest, and in fact the foundation of all the rest.

Few things are so marvellous as that any one who is not totally ignorant of divine revelation should imagine himself a man of blameless morals on the ground of his conduct towards his fellows; yet nothing is more common. A man may rob God and be thought no thief, he may break his vows to the Most High and be esteemed no liar, he may even

destroy souls and never be accused of murder. These are crimes of which the world takes no cognizance, and which human legislation could not even attempt to punish without an invasion of the divine prerogative ; but, in the last great day, when for every idle word an account must be rendered to God, he will bring every work into judgment and every secret thing, whether it be good or bad, Matt. xii. 36 ; Ecc. xii. 14.

Terrific are the disclosures which one ray of light from eternity may make, even now. Let the sinner but arrive at anything like a correct apprehension of the enormity of his transgressions, as committed against God, and the divine forbearance towards a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, Rom. ix. 22, as he will then perceive himself to be, will appear the most surprising thing within the whole compass of his knowledge.

Persons who can wonder at the anguish of an awakened conscience, will do well to ascertain whether sin has ever been to them an occasion of uneasiness. Surely, it is no marvel that a man who finds himself in instant danger of everlasting death, should betray the secret of his misery by the intensity of his emotions. Of such a condition of mind, even under ordi-

nary circumstances, the picture drawn by the psalmist is no exaggeration: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long: for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer," Psalm xxxii. 3, 4. That unpardoned sinners should pass successive days and nights of sleepless anguish, is nothing half so strange as that the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, should be in their feasts. The condemned cell is an unseemly place for merriment.

Caution may be necessary here, lest you should mistake the nature of religious convictions, and lay undue stress on that which, after all, may be considered accidental. Overwhelming alarm, though exceedingly natural, is by no means an indispensable accompaniment of genuine religious impressions. The utmost terror, of which the human system is capable, is no infallible presage of conversion; considered in itself, it affords not the slightest ground of hope. The thing to be regarded is not the amount of conviction, but its result. Some, have made the "fair havens," without the horrors of a "middle passage." I have known a thoughtless sinner, without any pre-

vious alarm of conscience, subdued by the tenderness of divine compassion, and weeping at the cross to find himself forgiven. As a contrast to such a case, look at the instance of Judas; conviction there amounted to agony, but he died in his sins.

No amount of anguish, on the part of the transgressor, can render compensation to God, or cancel the sentence of condemnation. The torments of hell would not do it. The terrors of conviction, therefore, are of no value in themselves, they are only means to an end,—that end is conversion, the turning of a soul from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. Whatever secures that end is satisfactory; whatever falls short of it is not so. But how shall the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? How shall they who are accustomed to do evil learn to do good? Jer. xiii. 23. How shall the sinner, condemned by his own conscience as well as by the law of God, enter into any new arrangement with him whom he has so long and so grievously disobeyed? It was in relation to similar difficulties that the disciples of our Lord were once "astonished out of measure, saying among themselves,

Who then can be saved?" His reply, on that occasion, contains our only caveat against despair: "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible," Mark x. 26, 27.

If you are really anxious that your concern about your soul should come to a favourable issue, consult your pastor. To suppose that parents who pray for the salvation of their children would knowingly attend the ministry of an unconverted man, would be to do them an injustice. Go, then, and tell him all your heart. Supposing him to be the man I have imagined, he will be more delighted to see you on this business than on any other errand. He watches for souls as one who must give account, and his heart has often been pained to think of you as among the unconverted portion of his flock. Go, and tell him that God is answering his prayers on your behalf; that your conscience is awakened, and that you want to know what you must do to be saved.

Have you left your father's house, and all its hallowed associations? Are you abroad in the world without a guide, a religious outlaw, a mere wanderer, a sheep having no shepherd? Seek one. If you cannot find him in your

own circle, look for him in another. Take care to select a man of God who is familiar with such cases as yours. Remember the importance of a right choice, and ask divine direction to make it. Your salvation depends on your treatment now. Fall into unskilful hands, and your soul may be lost. Shun the man who would make light of your depression; the fact marks him a self-deceiver or a hypocrite. Have nothing to do with the false prophets who prophesy lies: tell them that you have listened to "smooth things," too long already. Decline the aid which would hastily extract the barbed arrow, and heal your wound but slightly. And when you have secured the advice and sympathy of a man eminently qualified to render you the assistance you require, take care not to place him in a false position. Think not that he can be your proxy, or save you by his prayers. The chief good he can do you, is to remove your misapprehensions. He can only show you the path of life; you must walk in it. He can only lead you to the cross; you must worship there.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS, WHO IS ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN SALVATION.

In the absence of such counsel as I have advised you to seek, I would now set before you some further considerations. The Gospel is intended for such as you, it is adapted to your case, it has provided for it, and only waits your application.

I admit that your fears are reasonable, that your alarm of conscience is only what might be expected, and that in fact it is even less than every one, who now derides your anxiety, would feel if he knew the true circumstances of his own position. Till you have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you, no language can exaggerate your peril. But that hope *is* set before you, and is set before you that you may embrace it. The invitations of heavenly mercy are offered in perfect sincerity, and those invitations make provision for all possible varieties of exigence and misery.

It is well for you to think meanly of yourself, but it is not well for you to think meanly of God's salvation. It is well for you to know that your sins have reached to the heavens, but it is not well for you to forget that all manner of sin and blasphemy may be forgiven.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so was the Son of man lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, chap. iii. 14, 15. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21.

Having broken the law, you deserve to suffer its penalties, but One who fulfilled the law, and made it honourable, offers on your behalf his own suretiship, that mercy may extend to you, and leave the integrity of divine government unimpaired; so that God "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 26. Renounce all self-dependence, plead his sacrifice, approach the throne of grace through his mediation; carry thither the burden of your guilt, acknowledge there, with a broken heart, the

melancholy aggravations of your wickedness, —how you have sported with your own deceivings, how you have trifled with redeeming love, how you deserve to perish; express your grateful wonder that you have not perished long ago; confess that you have nothing to bring but pollution and misery, and on the ground of personal desert, nothing to expect but everlasting destruction. Thus go, and you shall not go in vain; for God is waiting to be gracious, and "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John i. 9.

The course which I recommend for your adoption is no untried experiment, nor is it one of doubtful or uncertain issue. It was thus that, in apostolic days, sinners of Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, of all shades of character and every variation of guilt, found mercy and eternal life. And the message which they welcomed, and in which they triumphed, has been, through each succeeding age, "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16. Millions, now "before the throne," having "washed their robes and made them white in

the blood of the Lamb," Rev. vii. 14, were once as far from the kingdom of heaven as you. Had you overheard their supplications, as they ventured near the footstool of mercy, invited thither only through his abundant grace, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4, you would have perceived, that they felt themselves as destitute of every claim to salvation, as you now apprehend yourself to be. That persuasion was perfectly correct; it came of him who called them. But, nevertheless, they obtained mercy. "Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. iii. 24, they lived in happiness and died in triumph. And no marvel;—to live was Christ, to die was gain. And wherever the Gospel has been fully and faithfully proclaimed, it has been accompanied with similar signs and wonders. Men of every clime, and of every colour, have proved its adaptation "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" so that myriads who were ready to perish, and among them the most barbarous and brutalized specimens of fallen humanity, have thus received "forgiveness of sins, and inheritance

among them which are sanctified by faith," Acts xxvi. 18.

As to the temptation of deferring your application to Christ until you have something to recommend you to his notice, you may wait till doomsday, and never find it. Sin and misery are the only recommendation you possess, and, (thanks to his love and mercy!) he demands no other, Luke xix. 10. Your only chance of salvation is submission, immediate and entire submission, to the King of righteousness. And it is not a mere chance, it is an absolute certainty; for God is faithful who hath promised. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. Suffer not Satan to perplex you with metaphysical difficulties about believing, but DO IT. God has commanded you; that is your warrant: and God would never command his creatures to do that which is absurd or impossible, John vi. 29.

A glory shines in the great salvation, which, when once perceived by the awakened sinner, fills his soul with joy and peace in believing. The reason why many spend days, and weeks, and months of anguish, before they are enabled to rejoice in God their Saviour, is, that their

views of redemption are confused and unscriptural. They are looking for recommendations which God has nowhere required, and which they will never be able to produce, and the result is that they remain in bondage to their fears. Those fears, as I have already attempted to show, are perfectly reasonable, and had not God provided for their removal, nothing but deadly delusion could ever put them to silence. But he has made this provision. He has laid help upon One that is mighty, "mighty to save."

Justification by the works of the law is out of the question; but not so, justification by faith. No longer is it necessary to ask—"Who shall ascend into heaven?—that is, to bring Christ down from above;" he is come already, and has died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God. Nor is it necessary to inquire, "Who shall descend into the deep?—that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;" he is not there, he is risen; having been delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification. But what saith the Scripture? "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt

confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 6—10.

Some, when reminded of the great atonement, express their apprehensions lest, with all its alleged sufficiency, its blessings should not extend to them. Theirs would be reasonable fears, could it be shown that Christ died for those alone who are ultimately saved. In that case the only demonstration that he died for any must be derived from their final perseverance: meanwhile, the application of an awakened sinner for pardon, not to mention the confidence of an established Christian as to eternal life, must depend, not on the virtue, but on the specialty, of Christ's sacrifice. This is, indeed, the form which is given to incipient hope, in some of our religious treatises and popular hymns. Supposing it to be correct, it is somewhat strange that, in no instance, either in their sermons or epistles, have the apostles so represented it.

Redemption would have little analogy to the other works of God, if redundancy of

goodness were not one of its characteristics. The vital air is not meted out according to the number who actually breathe, nor is the sunshine measured to the eyes which behold the light. In the natural world there is a profusion of bounty, a provision co-extensive with the wants of man, so that were the inhabitants of the globe increased a thousandfold, whatever they might lack, as to the conventional luxuries of life, there would still be air and sunshine enough for all.

But on a subject involving so deeply our dearest hopes, we are not left to make the best we can of admonitory silence or analogical conjecture: we have a more certain word of prophecy. If, on the one hand, we have plenty of evidence that the blessings of salvation were designed for those who actually receive them, on the other, we have proofs, not less abundant, that they were divinely provided for the whole human race. Undoubtedly, air and sunshine are gifts which God has bestowed that we might welcome and enjoy them, or they had never been ours; but air and sunshine had still been what they are, had we refused them both, or never seen the light.

Accordingly, we find one apostle assuring a

promiscuous multitude, that God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless them in turning away every one of them from his iniquities, Acts iii. 26; and another assigning as a reason for leaving certain of his own nation to wonder and perish, that they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, chap. xiii. 46.

There is, indeed, a limitation which may afford you just occasion of uneasiness; but it is the limitation, not of the sacrifice of Christ, but of your faith in his atonement. If by the grace of God he tasted death for every man, Heb. ii. 9, he tasted death for you. The apostle John, as if anticipating the difficulties which some might raise on the ground of non-provision for their pardon and acceptance, was careful to state that Jesus Christ, the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, is not so for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world, 1 John ii. 2. The provision is made, whether men will have it or not; the table is spread, and all things are now ready, let who will begin to make excuse. But beware, lest you trifle with the gracious invitation, for in that case "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of

judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26, 27. Those who deny the Lord that bought them, bring upon themselves swift destruction, 2 Peter ii. 1.

You may forego the benefits which result from his sacrifice, but Christ will not, on that account, forego his property in you. Your present existence is one of the results of his death. Had he not said, of the first human transgressors,—"Save them from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom," they might have died on the day they fell, and have left no posterity. Every sinner upon earth owes it, therefore, to the mediation and sacrifice of Christ that he lives, and moves, and has his being. "The father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," John iii. 35. Providential blessings flow from Calvary, Col. i. 14—20. And "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," 1 Cor. xv. 22. But the resurrection which results from his death, and of which he was the first-fruits, may prove to you the resurrection of damnation, John v. 29. Thus, the self-same truth becomes to some a savour of life unto life, and to others a savour of death unto

death: the former, in every instance where it answers its primary design; the latter, in relation to all who wilfully neglect its gracious provisions, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

The commission of sovereign goodness, which God has sent to our apostate race, bears as its seal, the divine inscription,—"They shall reverence my Son." That sentiment expresses the purpose of the Most High, and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than that purpose fail. Some may question its sincerity, and others deny its existence, but scepticism cannot alter facts. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13. While men profanely trifle and yet are allowed to live, while they blaspheme the Majesty on high and yet the lightning lingers and the thunders of heaven slumber in their pavilion, divine forbearance may be mistaken for indifference. But "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," 2 Peter iii. 9, 10. The Saviour who ascended to heaven intends to return in his

glory, and to make his foes his footstool. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him," Rev. i. 7. Though once despised and rejected of men, heaven pours forth its legions to do homage at his feet, and while thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, cherubim and seraphim, move on in shining hosts to vindicate his claims and celebrate his triumph, this is the mighty music of their march,—"They shall reverence my Son." It waxes louder and louder, till it breaks the silence of the grave. The guilty dead, who formerly refused to bow to his authority, now perceive, that in spite of all their treachery or treason, he must reign; and as, in the phrenzy of despair, they pass with weeping and gnashing of teeth, from the judgment-seat to their dreary prison, their sobs, their sighs, their groans, respond the declaration,—"They shall reverence my Son."

While that day delays, the only question, concerning the matter in hand, which hangs in the balance and waits your decision, is a question of time. Shall it be then? or now? Your ultimate submission to Christ is certain;

nothing can be surer. At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, Phil. ii. 10. First or last, all shall acknowledge him the King of kings, the Lord of lords, Rev. xix. 16. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," Psalm ii. 10—12.

Are you already overwhelmed with shame and anguish, to think of the ungrateful return which the Saviour of sinners has received at your hands? Hail that very circumstance as a token that God has not abandoned you to a hardened heart. This was the sign of the promise to "pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications;" "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born," Zech. xii. 10. Transgressors who feel no alarm, afford no hope. The man who has never mourned for sin, has little to expect but

its fearful penalties. But are you weeping, before the cross, with a broken heart? Then I am persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation. It is more than probable that the very anxiety which distresses you is the result of awakening grace. While you tremble, God is passing by. The earthquake, and the fire, and the still small voice, are signs of an eventful crisis. The Holy Spirit is striving with your soul. It is his, not only to sanctify the faithful, but to reprove the world, John xvi. 8. Hearken then to his reproof, and shudder at the thought of a relapse into carelessness and unconcern. Heaven and hell await your decision. Resist this once the Holy Ghost, and he may never trouble you again. Welcome his gracious aid, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

The dispensation of the Spirit affords the highest encouragement to every awakened sinner. It places within his reach, divine omnipotence, to crucify the flesh and overcome the world. While we wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, Eph. vi. 12, "the

weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," 2 Cor. x. 4. And to all who will fight the good fight of faith, is this armoury available. Of all the promises of God, those which vouchsafe the gracious agency of the Holy Spirit are the most emphatic and comprehensive. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 9—13. To say that every sentence here is more precious than rubies, or than thousands of gold and silver, is to give but feeble utterance to a sentiment which, with befitting intensity, no human language can express. And the promise is not only of incalculable worth, but of unlimited application. It secures the highest gift of God, and it con-

descends to the deepest wretchedness of man, so that the veriest wretch alive has no right to say,—"That assurance was never meant for *me*."

The first heaven-ward movement of the soul, like all the subsequent acts of faith,—"is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," Rom. ix. 16. Perhaps few passages have been more perverted, by false theology, than the text which announces this cheering and consolatory fact. According to some, it would mean that a man may determine to do the will of God, and to run in the way of his commandments, and yet that some divine and inscrutable decree may hold him back from that purpose, and render his salvation impossible. But is any such instance recorded in the Scriptures? has it ever occurred in the history of the universe? Nay, indeed! All the appeals to the sinner's conscience, throughout the sacred oracles, either broadly assert, or by implication admit, that he has ruined himself, and that from God his help is found. Review the expostulations addressed to ancient Israel, the discourses of prophets and apostles, the lamentation of Christ over Jerusalem on the eve of its final abandonment,—

passages, as a whole, so numerous that to transcribe them would be to begin a new concordance,—and can you, dare you imagine that all these statements were made in insincerity? that the very reluctance for which the sinner is blamed is the result of destiny which leaves him no choice?—and that, while he seems to refuse and rebel, he is only doing the secret will of God, and fulfilling the divine determination concerning him?

I confess that I ask these questions with fear and trembling, for the very attempt to give them utterance seems to border on profaneness. If they could be answered in the affirmative, it would be easy to show, that prophets and apostles ought rather to have come forth with tears to weep over the hapless destiny of man, than with censures to blame him for doing that which, notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary, is in reality the will of God. It is true that Omniscience foresees all wickedness, it is true that Omnipotence overrules it for the highest good,—the instances of Pharaoh and Judas are cases in point,—but to affirm that transgressors have been determined to iniquity by any volition excepting their own, and his who takes them captive at his will,

2 Tim. ii. 26, is to make God the author of evil, and Christ the minister of sin, Gal. ii. 17. And to imagine that under a dispensation of grace, or indeed, that under any dispensation at all, there can be a disposition, on the part of creatures, to that holiness which is divinely forbidden them, and an inclination to direct their steps in the way of truth and righteousness from which, neverthless, they are held back by divine restraint, is to imagine a case which has never happened, and which, in this world, never can, while God is faithful to his promises. The statement contained in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans is nothing to the point, for the holding back there is imputed not to divine interposition, but to human depravity, whereas all the opposite tendencies are expressly ascribed to God.

The doctrine which I am endeavouring to combat comes of wresting from its meaning a passage which in reality asserts the contrary. "It *is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," for "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," James i. 17. The will of

a sinner to do as God would have him, and his determination to run the heaven-ward course, belong not to nature, but to grace. "If any man love God, the same is known of him," 1 Cor. viii. 3. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Matt. xvi. 17.

From the first tear which marks the contrition of the sinner at the cross, to the last sigh which indicates the dismission of the saint to glory, all is grace, free, sovereign, and divine. It is "of God that showeth mercy," to teach the transgressor the error of his ways. It is "of God that showeth mercy," to invite the penitent to the feet of Jesus. It is "of God that showeth mercy," to grant him pardon there. It is "of God that showeth mercy," to bid him go in peace and sin no more. It is "of God that showeth mercy," to uphold and bless him to the end. It is "of God that showeth mercy," to grant him victory over death. It is "of God that showeth mercy," to receive him at last to his own eternal kingdom and glory.

If, in the course of our conference on these matters, one correct impression of divine truth

has reached your heart, "God, that showeth mercy," wrought it there. Welcome his gracious operation, and you will see greater things than these. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. An agency which can renew your soul is passing by. The Lord himself is here. While I am setting these statements before you, I feel that he is enabling me to realize the awful fact that I am pleading with you for your life. I would wish to do it, so that I may meet you without a blush before the judgment-seat, should inquest be made there concerning the loss of your soul. I would wish to clear my conscience of your blood, so that should we rise together from the same grave, I may not be afraid to face you when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. I would set forth the claims of Christ, and beseech you, on his behalf, as I shall wish I had done when we both shall behold him in glory. I want to witness your submission to his sceptre. I want to have the happiness of leading you to his feet. As a dying man, and with many tears, I en-

treat you to give him your heart, and to do it at once. Why not? and why not now? He claims it as the Saviour of the world, he demands it as the Redeemer of your soul.

"If one died for all, then were all dead: and he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. The duty is immediate and imperative. A season more favourable will never come. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Your soul, somewhat softened by divine truth, may now more readily receive the heavenly impression which the Holy Spirit has long been waiting to impart. Then trifle with his gracious influences no more. Jesus himself invites you to be his own for ever. Welcome the message of his love, and to-morrow's sun shall rise on a new world; old things will have passed away, and all things have become new. In proof of its new creation, new affections, desires, hopes, and motives, shall inspire your soul. The pulsations of spiritual life, and the breathings of devotion, shall mark your second birth. This is regeneration, and without it none shall see the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHILD OF MANY PRAYERS, WHOSE ALARM OF CONSCIENCE IS BEGINNING TO SUBSIDE.

THE title of this chapter describes the most critical period in the whole existence of a human soul, the turning point on which the character of its immortality depends. Reader! have you reached that pass? Then I ask,—What is your condition? What are your prospects? Is there a change for the better, or for the worse? For the one, or the other, there must be. You cannot now regain the position which you lately abandoned. Advance, or retreat, is your only alternative.

You have been seriously alarmed, and not without reason. A beam of light from eternity has brought to your view some awful matters of which you were previously unconscious. You have seen your desperate wickedness before God. You have felt yourself standing at his tribunal, speechless and condemned. You

have apprehended every hope of succour, from your own resources, to be cut off for ever.

And all this, though true, was only part of the truth. A clear perception of the whole would probably have destroyed your reason or your life. A full discovery of the enormity of sin, and of the ultimate penalties to which it leads, is reserved for the disclosures of eternity. In the present life, our most overwhelming apprehensions, on these subjects, fall amazingly short of the facts from which they are derived; and whether we direct our view to the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or to the riches of the grace of God, "we see through a glass darkly." Enough, however, may be seen, even here, to shake the strongest mind, and to melt the hardest heart.

Of these discoveries you have had, at least, a glimpse. And now,—what will you do? Sit down in despair, and give up all for lost? That seems unlikely, for your alarm is already beginning to abate. The more fearful probability is, that you will relapse into carelessness and unbelief, as many have done before you, whose goodness was "as a morning cloud and as the early dew," Hosea vi. 4.

The most overwhelming terrors have some-

times passed away with the circumstances which occasioned them, and have left no trace behind. Most commonly does this occur in cases of imminent peril, whether from bodily disease or personal danger. Many a sick-bed convert has left the chamber of affliction, only to disappoint every hope which had been cherished concerning him: and often has the shipwrecked mariner, who, while surrounded by the foaming billows, was loudly crying to God for mercy on his soul, begun to blaspheme again, the moment he reached the shore in safety.

Religious impressions unconnected with apprehensions of immediate death are usually more promising; but even these may leave the heart unchanged. And wherever this occurs, the probability of subsequent awakening is fearfully diminished. "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26, 27.

It may be assumed, as the result of general observation, that, where this is the case, not

one feeling of alarm or anxiety will be left, to bear witness of better days. But, rely not, I beseech you, on the fact of your continued uneasiness; for although pain indicates life, it promises nothing as to its continuance. Instances are not unknown, in which a sinner has more than once or twice been awakened to an apprehension of his guilt and misery, only to return, after each interval of reflection, to a still more awful state of impenitence.

Of some, who are now on their way to everlasting death, it may be justly asserted, that the more they were stricken the more they revolted, till, abandoned to a hardened heart, they wrought iniquity with greediness; compunction and remorse gave place to profanity and recklessness, and none can now raise a louder laugh, than they, at the terrors of death and judgment. In their case, conscience, having been seared with a hot iron, 1 Tim. iv. 2, has suffered all that it can ever feel, until eternity shall nerve afresh its sensibility of anguish. On them, threatenings and invitations, judgments and mercies, are equally lost: the most alarming providence, the most affecting appeal, makes no impression. It would seem that the only purpose, for which they live, is to fill up

the measure of their fathers, and to prepare themselves for wrath unto the uttermost.

But the object of Satan may be fully secured without this parade of wickedness. It often is so, and the awakened sinner, instead of following out his convictions, relapses into a state of respectable carelessness and inanity. I have known this to be the case with some, whose previous characters had not, in the common acceptation of the term, been strictly moral, till they were brought under religious impressions, which, at the time, gave promise of something better than outward reformation. Powerfully affected by correct apprehensions of divine truth, they assumed the character of hopeful inquirers; but though, for a season, they maintained appearances, religious insensibility was their ultimate resting-point. They have broken off their ungodly associations, they are chargeable with no actual vice, they are constant at the sanctuary, they are liberal in their contributions there, they pass for men of blameless reputation, but, after all, they have no religion. Their condition is less striking than that of the declared apostate, but it is not less fatal. They are dead while they live, and their profession, partaking not of love to God

and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is only as the beauty of a whited sepulchre.

There is reason to fear that, in some instances, the starting-post being mistaken for the goal, even deep religious impressions become a snare and a curse. A man whose alarm of conscience was the only thing about him which awakened hope, at last persuades himself that the by-gone season of terror marked his translation from the kingdom of darkness. Destitute of love to the Saviour, conformity to his image, and devotedness to his service, he imagines himself a Christian. His condition, henceforth, becomes one of augmented and inconceivable peril. To awaken him again to religious anxiety is now almost a hopeless undertaking. In vain we press on his conscience appeals to the sinner; he thinks them misapplied, for he esteems himself a saint. An altered man he undoubtedly is; but the greatest, and, in fact, the only change he has ever witnessed, has been conversion, not from darkness to light, but from irreligion to self-deception. "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isaiah xliv. 20.

Think not, however, that, because deep convictions of sin have sometimes left the soul unsaved, that this is their necessary, or even their usual termination. The reverse is the fact, for the deeper the impression, the more probable is its endurance. Backsliders and apostates are much oftener found among those whose original claim to discipleship was associated with no very strong emotions, than with those whose history was marked by more striking features. And occasional cases of failure, wherever they may occur, are not the rule, but the exception. Of those whose powerful religious impressions excite the hopes of the faithful, a few may draw back unto perdition, but all the rest believe to the saving of the soul.

Infer not, then, that appropriate evidences of faith are usually sought in vain, or that, at best, the proofs of conversion are unsatisfactory and inconclusive. Amidst all its imperfections, the Christian church still reckons among its members not a few who not only have eternal life, but who know that they have it. The testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have their con-

versation in the world, 2 Cor. i. 12, coincides with the higher witness of the Holy Spirit, and proves them "the children of God," "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," Rom. viii. 16; 1 Peter ii. 9.

Is this the case with you? Have you put away your sackcloth, to gird yourself with gladness, and exchanged alarm of conscience for joy and peace in believing? Then, with a few more counsels and admonitions, I will presently conclude.

Supposing it to be as I have said, the recent crisis in your life will constitute, henceforth, an era in your history, more important than any besides. Compared with it, an exchange of depression for prosperity, of poverty for affluence, or even of infirmity for healthfulness, will only seem a slight transition. It has been your second birth, your conversion, your deliverance from the power of darkness, and your translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Col. i. 13. Take care that your evidences of this great change are scriptural and satisfactory. You will want to review them, another day; and they must bear inspection at the judgment-seat. In order to this, it will be necessary, not only that your views of experimental

religion should be clear, but that the transformation of your character should be thorough and complete. While, on the one hand, your exclusive reliance is on the obedience, atonement, and intercession, of Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4; on the other, rest satisfied with nothing short of entire conformity to "the will of God, in Christ Jesus, concerning you," 1 Thess. v. 18. Bear in mind, however, that your life, from this day forth, is to be a scene of conflict; but, of conflict which tends to victory. Take to yourself the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, to stand, Eph. vi. 13. Think not, that foes, once vanquished, will retire for ever; nor imagine, that advantages, once realized, will suffice for all future emergencies. Death unto sin, and life unto righteousness, must be a daily, perpetual, work; in which, little will seem to have been done, while anything remains undone, Phil. iii. 12. Hence, prepare for mortifications and discouragements; but let them rather embolden than dishearten you. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," Matt. xi. 12. Inde-

cision will secure nothing but defeat; and faith, to be victorious, must be resolute and undaunted, as was his who could say, in the prospect of martyrdom,—"None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy," Acts xx. 24. But, be of good comfort; the prize before you is infinitely great, and will make amends for any conceivable or inconceivable amount of self-denial, Rev. ii. 10.

In the meanwhile, remember that with you the present is but the beginning of days. Treat with becoming esteem and affection those who were in Christ before you. It is always a bad omen, as to their future character, when converts imbibe a censorious spirit, and begin their Christian course dissatisfied with every body but themselves. True wisdom comports with deep humility. The wisdom which is from above is peaceable as well as pure, and gentleness and meekness are among its essential characteristics, James iii. 17. Fix your standard as high as possible, take as your model the pattern of Christ himself; but let your own departures from it more deeply afflict your mind than the defects, real or supposed, of those whose longer standing in

the church of God should at least entitle them to your respect. Perhaps you attempt to justify an opposite course, on the ground that, though you already esteem them highly in love for their work's sake, you wish to find, in their growing zeal and spirituality, occasion to love them more. I admit the correctness of the motive and the desirableness of the end, but I demur as to the means, and I wish to show you "a more excellent way." The elders of Israel, of whose slothfulness you have too much reason to complain, will be far more likely to detect their imperfections, and to do again their first works, on perceiving the greater devotedness of a mere stripling in the faith, than they will on hearing themselves rudely censured by one who is but of yesterday, and whom, with all their acknowledged deficiencies, they could serviceably instruct in some of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. And if the tendency of the one course would be to awaken holy emulation, and of the other to provoke bad feeling, little consideration is necessary to decide which should have the preference.

But while diffidence and modesty should mark your treatment of those who were in

Christ before you, your measures to discountenance sin and resist temptation can hardly be too determined. Here you must set your face as a flint, and suffer nothing in the world to daunt you. Experience will soon prove that firmness is as well the happiest as the safest course. The man who avows his religious principles will be less likely to suffer annoyance from without, than will he who keeps them half concealed. There is something so commanding in devoted piety, that even the despisers of truth and godliness are awed by its presence. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," Prov. xvi. 7.

Should you find some difficulty in breaking away from former associates, who are still endeavouring to lead you into sin, a remedy is at hand. I have never known it fail. Set your heart on their conversion, and employ your utmost energies to bring every one of them to Christ. The result will be that they will welcome salvation, or decline your acquaintance. In either case, they will cease to trouble you.

Make a public profession of your faith. No season will be more appropriate, for that pur-

pose, than that which marks your change of heart. Procrastination will bring nothing but vexation and injury. Take your stand at once. Beware of the dangerous resolve to become decided by degrees. Your services have already been lost too long, to Him who ought to have had them all, and to have had them always. The only plan of redeeming the time now lost, is to refrain from losing more. The precious months and years which you have wasted in the neglect of religion and the indulgence of sin, are gone for ever, and nothing can recall them. All that you can now do, is to make the most of opportunities which may yet remain. If so, determine not to let one slip. Begin to-day. Tell the first judicious Christian you can find, of the happy and glorious change you have recently undergone. He will give thanks to God on your behalf, and afford you counsel suited to your new position.

Fulfil, forthwith, the dying charge of Him whom you now delight to acknowledge as your Lord and Master. "The same night in which he was betrayed," he "took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of

me. After the same manner also, he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," 1 Cor. xi. 23—25. His disciples are thus commanded to show his death "till he come." To them, the observance of this holy ordinance is therefore, not an affair of supererogation, a mere privilege which they may claim or neglect at pleasure; it is a matter of sacred obligation from which no servant of Christ can lawfully be excused. Undoubtedly it requires certain qualifications; "but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup," verse 28. The previous question is personal religion. Ascertain that fact, and then take your place among the holy brethren, who, blamelessly walking in all the ordinances and commandments of God their Saviour, wait for his appearing.

Cherish fellowship with the saints. Aspire to the friendship of the holiest men within your reach. There are some into whose society no Christian can be thrown without finding himself all the nearer to heaven for their converse. On the principle which led the psalmist

to prefer one day in the sanctuary to a thousand elsewhere, one hour of such communion is worth more than weeks, or months, of ordinary intercourse.

Expect not the earliest stages of your Christian pilgrimage to be the happiest. Should they prove so, you will, at the termination of your course, have lived to very little purpose. Covet earnestly the best gifts, and seek them in the most excellent way, 1 Cor. xii. 31. You have no need to envy the spiritual attainments of others, for the source whence they obtained them is equally available to you. Bear this constantly in mind, and "show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end," Heb. vi. 11. Should you now content yourself with a low degree of personal religion, the probability is that you will never attain to eminent devotedness.

Thousands are irreparably injured by precocious satisfaction. Their piety, crippled in its infancy by swaddling-bands and leading-strings, never attains a firm and vigorous stature. Its trembling step betrays the secret of its feebleness, and instead of appearing as a giant to run a race, it is always requiring some fresh stimulant to strengthen the things

which remain and are ready to die, Rev. iii. 2.

This will, in a great measure, account for the lamentable fact that, among persons of undoubted piety, so few are found rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. Their prospects, for the future, are to a large proportion of Christians, rather a source of consolation than of bliss. They regard the many mansions in their Father's house, rather as an asylum to which they may betake themselves when all other habitations fail, than as the glorious and unfading inheritance which God has prepared for the heirs of promise.

The following familiar illustration, borrowed from common life, may serve to show, on the one hand, what immortal hope too often is, and on the other, what it always ought to be:— An unsuccessful tradesman, amidst his most distressing embarrassments, consoles himself with the thought, that, should the worst come to the worst, he need not starve; for there will still remain—the parish and the work-house. But how different this state of feeling, from that of some noble youth, who "under tutors and governors," is grateful for their kindness, and anxious to turn their instructions

to the best account, and so prepare himself for public life, but whose heart often bounds at the thought, that every month he spends at school, or college, brings so much the nearer that happy day, when he shall lay aside his tasks, and obtain the full and uncontrolled possession of his splendid patrimony!

Were the children of God accustomed to live in the full enjoyment of all the sacred immunities which even now are included in their heavenly birthright, it would, with them, be no unusual thing to hail, with satisfaction, advancing age, or premature decay. The instinctive love of life would be overborne by a higher principle, and "a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. i. 23, would remove the bitterness of death. The case which I am now supposing, is no wild theory of modern times; it is the sober truth of scriptural antiquity. It was thus that the primitive Christians were found "rejoicing in hope," Rom. xii. 12; giving thanks unto the Father, which had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12; and congratulating each other, as life was on the wane, that then was their salvation nearer than when they first believed, Rom. xiii. 11.

Remember, that your happiness and usefulness, will both depend on the state of your heart towards God. With warm and lively religious affections, his service will be the joy and the rejoicing of your soul. There is something wrong, wherever irksomeness attaches to any part of religious obligation. Christ requires you to bear the cross, Mark viii. 34, but if your religion has any claim to apostolicity, that cross will be not your burden, but your boast, Gal. vi. 14. Think it not true cross-bearing to serve your Lord with hesitation and reluctance, and to find discipleship a weariness. If you are truly his, your very flesh will rejoice to spend and be spent for him, 2 Cor. xii. 15; your body and soul, redeemed by his blood, will, with all their powers and faculties, be consecrated to his praise. Never will you wish to ascertain, how little you may do and yet preserve your credit and maintain a peaceful conscience. The only limit of your services will be your capacity for holy labour, as strengthened for the undertaking by the grateful affection of a devoted heart.

Constantly bear in mind the interests of pure and undefiled religion. If your heart be right with God, it will be impossible for you to look

abroad, on a world which lieth in wickedness, without deeply painful emotions. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not thy word;"—"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," Psalm cxix. 136, 158; were the expressions of devoted piety under a dispensation which afforded but a very distant prospect of the universal reign of truth and righteousness. But Christianity abounds with motives, and hopes, and aims, which Judaism never knew; and the modern church may offer, with augmented faith, the ancient prayer—"Oh! let the nations be glad and sing for joy. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee: then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us," Psalm lxvii. 4—6.

The Canaanite had no claim upon Israel, in relation to the institutions of Moses, or the services of the Levitical priesthood. Those services and institutions were of a character so exclusively national, that to the race of Edom it was accounted a matter of peculiar favour to be allowed, even in their third generation, to share the blessings of Zion, Deut. xxiii. 8. Over neighbouring tribes and nations was ex-

tended the fearful interdict—"An Ammonite, or Moabite, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever," verse 3. But subsequent revelations of mercy have removed these ancient landmarks, and have assured the world "that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him," Acts x. 34, 35. Animated by this persuasion, the apostle of the Gentiles considered himself a "debtor, both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise," Rom. i. 14; and the debt which he thus acknowledged and engaged to pay, was the personal proclamation of mercy, the extension of vital religion.

Content yourself with no inferior aim. Apostolic Christianity is always diffusive, and may thus be known by its fruits. To be satisfied with mere exertion, or to imagine that everything is done when the grand object of labour remains unaccomplished, is to seek inglorious ease, and to welcome repose too soon. Yet, with many, the ultimate object of zeal is simply to satisfy conscience; and verily they have

their reward. Their consciences are perfectly easy, and their kindred continue to perish.

In benevolent effort, apart from religion, the mere satisfaction of conscience is the thought which last enters the mind. Should a fellow-creature be in danger of perishing in the flames, your design in attempting his rescue would not be to be guiltless of his blood, but to save his life. On the failure of one expedient, you would have recourse to another, and would not retire from the spot, or think of finding satisfaction in the thought of having done your duty by him, until he had been delivered from peril or burnt to ashes. In like manner, are you bound to attempt the rescue of souls, and to save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire, Jude 23; and never, till the sinner has been plucked as a brand from the burning, or has perished there, should you relax your efforts, or even regard them with complacency.

Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Phil. ii. 5. He had compassion on the ignorant and on them who were out of the way. He went about doing good. It was his meat to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish his work, John iv. 34; and for the joy thus set before him, he en-

dured the cross, despising the shame. Should you, in following his example, share his treatment, and meet with unkindness and opposition in quarters where your exertions deserve a different return, remember that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, Heb. xii. 3, and with his dying breath interceded for the men who were mocking his agonies.

Learn to regard religious truth in its fair and beautiful proportions. Beware of the popular heresy of mistaking a part for the whole, or of magnifying one feature to the disadvantage and distortion of all the rest. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? And if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?"

All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17: but, of this idea, many Christians have no powerful apprehension, and hence they speak of "favourite doctrines" and "darling attributes," as if theology were rather a matter of taste, and feeling, and preference, than a divine science,

relating to facts extensive as the universe and immutable as the throne of God.

The workman who needeth not to be ashamed, must rightly divide the word of truth, 2 Tim. ii. 15. He must assign to every doctrine its relative importance, and to every duty its true position. And the only satisfactory method of attaining that end, will be found in the diligent and unbiassed study of the lively oracles. In this glorious enterprise, gratefully avail yourself of all the assistance which the wisdom and piety of past or present generations can bring, but remember to keep close to your heavenly guide. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isaiah viii. 20.

To maintain a healthful condition of piety there must be much secret prayer. If you wish to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," you must obtain that radiance as Moses did; it must be the reflected glory of divine communion, Exod. xxxiv. 29. From the closet, you will go to the sanctuary with exalted expectations, and seldom be disappointed there. The private exer-

cises of religion will prepare you for the public engagements of life, and impart to your character a fixedness of principle which nothing else can insure. The oak of the forest dares not spread its branches to the blast, but as its roots become more deeply imbedded in the soil. In like manner, the stability of your religious profession will depend upon that part of your character which is unseen of men. But let Christ dwell in your heart by faith, and then, rooted and grounded in love, you will be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, you will even know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 17—19.

Avoid the very appearance of evil, and as to all temptations from without, pass them by on the other side. When assailed by an adversary whom you cannot so easily escape, him resist, stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are also accomplished in your brethren, 1 Peter v. 8. When every other refuge seems to fail you, again betake yourself to first principles. Remember the promise —"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37; and bear in mind that

He who gave it is no stranger to your conflicts, "for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18.

Take alarm at every symptom of declension. Remember that the true course of piety is not retrograde, but progressive. "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger," Job xvii. 9. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 18. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint," Isaiah xl. 30, 31.

Await, with holy calmness, the closing scene. Be always ready, and then it cannot come upon you unawares. "Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," live in constant "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" and then when Providence shall intimate—"The Master is come, and calleth for thee," you will cheerfully reply—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

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